CHAPTER XVIII.

HISTORICAL NOTICE CONCERNING THE CAL-CULUS OF PROBABILITIES.

LONG ago were determined, in the simplest games, the ratios of the chances which are favorable or unfavorable to the players; the stakes and the bets were regulated according to these ratios. But no one before Pascal and Fermat had given the principles and the methods for submitting this subject to calculus, and no one had solved the rather complicated questions of this kind. It is, then, to these two great geometricians that we must refer the first elements of the science of probabilities, the discovery of which can be ranked among the remarkable things which have rendered illustrious the seventeenth century—the century which has done the greatest honor to the human mind. The principal problem which they solved by different methods, consists, as we have seen, in distributing equitably the stake among the players, who are supposed to be equally skilful and who agree to stop the game before it is finished, the condition of play being that, in order to win the game, one must gain a given number of points different for each of the players. It

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LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR

ON

PROBABILITIES.

BY

PIERRE SIMON, MARQUIS DE LAPLACE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SIXTH FRENCH EDITION

BY

FREDERICK WILSON TRUSCOTT, PH.D. (HARV.),

Professor of Germanic Languages in the West Virginia University,

AND

FREDERICK LINCOLN EMORY, M.E. (WOR. POLY. INST.),

Professor of Mechanics and Applied Mathematics in the West Virginia University; Mem. Amer. Soc. Mech. Eng.

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